



## Mythological Affinity Between Greek and Hindu Deities.

By:- Dr. Vandana Sharma

(Assistant professor, Department of English, JKP(PG) College, Muzzafarnagar)

### Abstract:

Greek mythology is a set of diverse traditional tales, told by the ancient Greeks about the exploits of gods and heroes and their relations with ordinary mortal beings. Given the multiplicity of myths that circulated in Greece, similarly Hinduism flourished in the laps of Indus, Hinduism and Greek mythology are two most ancient sect of beliefs. Though there are no written evidences of interactions between these two mythological ideologies, but one cannot deny the series of allegories between these two. In the present paper, I have studied the close affinity between these two oldest sects of faith.

Several scholars began to notice the various instances of prevailing allegory between the Greek and Hindu mythology. Sir William Jones came up with the concept of Indo-European language family in 1796. This theory postulated the use of similar sounds across different languages to signify similar meanings. For instance, one can consider the existence of word '*pitra*' in Sanskrit which literally means 'father'. Greek has a similar notation '*pater*' meaning 'father'. Similarly '*piter*' in Latin, '*patre*' in Umbrian, '*patyros*' in Illyrian. Such an observation successfully captured the fascination of mythological thinkers who were trying to theorize that these various ancient cultures that shared a common proto-language. In this paper, I have made attempts to establish the fact that if these cultures shared a proto-language, there is a possible existence of a 'proto-culture' as the very base of these cultures.

**Keywords:** Mythology, deities, ancient Greek civilization, Hinduism, indo-vedic culture, proto-culture

**“It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward”** (Joseph Campbell)

The above statement by Joseph Campbell not only accounts for relevance in the diaries of renowned scholars but a wide array of people also find its authority down the mythological pathways that leads to the contemporary world of today. Mythology, when scrutinized closely with regards to the modern era, emphasizes on our dependency on folklores and mythical stories. It shows us that we are all concatenated by a basic need to hear folklores, not only as a part of our culture and heritage, but also as an attempt to contemplate our existence, or in order to answer questions that are still alienated by the modern verses of science.

Religion, on the contrary developed as an emotional reflex that helps human kind to manage our lives and in order to maintain a smooth functional society. Taking pain and grief as a paradigm, pain can have extensive and very elaborate neurochemical and entirety physical dimension. Pain and grief comprises an integral part of human life, as humans we ruminate on moments of past, future being lost, hopes getting crucified and decaying past memories and experiences. Grief and pain can also be viewed in the form as separation distress, mythology was somehow created to attenuate the

severity of that pain and separation in the name of duties and 'karma'. Religion, thus, basically offers a grieving, accustomed to surrogate for the loss.

Religion was never a foreign concept for mankind, its rather as old and as primitive as the mankind itself. Religion was born and groomed along with mankind. The august pages of Oxford English dictionary defines a myth as –

**“A purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions or events and embodying some popular idea concerning natural history or historical phenomenon.”** (Catherine Soanes)

During the fourth century BCE, Aryans, the very same people that gave birth to the ancient and glorious civilization of Greece, established in much of the present day India. Aryans along with them brought their own lifestyle and their values of Deity worship. The pantheon of gods and deity worship, in a way similar to that of the ancient Greeks, somehow amalgamated with the indigenous culture of Dravidians involving forms of meditation and sculptural arts. This gave rise to a new set of beliefs and entirely new practices, tied in a loose string of faith, recognized as either pious worshippers of a demiurge supreme being or as mere atheists, that is as self-negating ascetics or as the men of the world, collectively groomed to form what we know as Hinduism.

Hinduism, knowing sundered origins in the Indus valley civilizations or the indo-vedic civilizations, is devoid of a founder. Being a *mélange* of diverse beliefs and traditions, it commands its superiority as one of the world's oldest and yet abiding religion. Hinduism grew out of the ancient *vedic* traditions and other indigenous beliefs, incorporated and implemented over time.

The holy lands of Indus, protected and cherished by the great Himalayas, breastfed by the majestic tribunes of the river *sindh* herself and hallowed by the goddess of nature and prosperity, was recognized as a home to gods itself. More than 4000 years back, the foundation of an eternal was laid by Aryans in these lands. Hinduism or the “*Hindu dharma*” is a set of belief that was nurtured and celebrated in the seclusion of sea and Himalayas. This set of beliefs was earthed on the law of eternal cycle of life – life and death (□□□□ □□ □□□□□□). It describes the four aims of human life or the “*purusharthas*” (□□□□□□□□) as

- ‘*Dharma*’ (□□□□: ) i.e. the virtue of righteousness
- ‘*Artha*’ (□□□□: ) i.e. the value of prosperity
- ‘*Kama*’ (□□□: ) i.e. the psychological value of love and the physical values of pleasure
- ‘*Moksha*’ (□□□□□: ) i.e. the liberation of soul or salvation

Hinduism is till date viewed as India's gift of knowledge to the world that remains at the cutting edge of science and spirituality. This paper aims at a comparative study between the two most ancient and prestigious faiths of humanity, the Greek mythology and the hindutava.

### **Nature Worship: An Integral part of Greek and Hindu mythology:**

The culture of both Greece and Hinduism both have embodied nature as a divine figure. Both sects cherish the premise of religion that man co-exists with other forms of being leading to an uninterrupted and interdependent system existing in nature.

Ancient Greek and Roman mythology encompasses on nature worship as a primitive source of religions beliefs. As remarked by great thinker Aristotle-

“*Ἐν πάσι γὰρ τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἐνεστί τι θαυματούν*” (“Parts of animals”, Book-I, 645 9.16)

Translated as “In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous”

We can find similar texts in Hinduism, where God portrays himself as the core of all living beings. As the much adored Hindu Deity Lord Krishna in Bhagwad Gita explains his oneness with all forms of plants and animals. He claims that all living creatures are a part of his great garland beautified as pearls.





Both Zeus and *Indra* are proclaimed as the gods of gods as well as of men in their own pantheon. They both command respect, in lieu of the heroic as well as the spiritual deeds performed by them. The ability to control weather and its forms is yet another similarity between the two deities. They both are the personified figures of Gods of rain, lightning and thunder. They both are depicted carrying a particular weapon, *Indra* namely *vajra* (𑖀𑖀𑖀𑖀: ) while Zeus is depicted carrying a thunderbolt. One can immediately see that both of these weapons have a strong resemblance to the physical phenomenon of thunder. Their respective adobes that is Mt. Olympus (Zeus's adobe) and Mt. Meru (*Indra's* adobe) allegorises. The fights that these deities have with their respective foes as well understood by Hasten as-

“ **the war of functions**”. He further says that “ **myths narrating these wars could be a symbolic representation of the social Norms of lower classes remaining subservient to the upper classes of priests and warriors**” (Hasten, L.W. Eddas and Vedas, comparative mythology and the Aryans invasion hypothesis)

Moreover at a closer glance, one may observe that both *Indra* and *Zeus* are known for their virility and amorous desire for women, There are several myths narrating how these deities disguised very often to seduce the subjects of their desire.



### War of Troy and Mahabharata

War of Troy and Mahabharata are great sagas of the two respective cultures. In Mahabharata the pandavas were exiled for a period of fourteen years, which is synonymous to the Trojan conflict that carried on for fourteen years. The actual war of troy as described by Homer in Iliad went on for fourteen consecutive days, similar is the case of Mahabharata as the war at *Kurushetra* was fourteen days long.

Arjun in Mahabharata has a similar character to Achilles of Trojan war. Both besides being highly skilled warriors were reluctant to fight the war in the very beginning. The lamenting image of *Achilles* over the dead body of *Patroclus* resembles closely to the lamenting image of Arjun over the dead body of his son *Abhimanyu*. Besides all these similarities one cannot deny the very cause if both the wars- prestige and women, namely *Draupadi* (in Mahabharata) and Helen (in the war of Troy). Both of these women were described to have been blessed with majestic charms.



### Hades and Yama (□□:)

Both Hades and Yama are proclaimed as the gods of underworld 'I'm their pantheon'. Both represent death, destruction and transformation of a soul. Another allegory between the two are their attendants, both these deities are accompanied by an abiding attendant. *Chitragupt* ( in the myth of *yama*) maintains a record of the soul's virtues and sins whereas in the myth of Hades, we have *Charos* (The angle of dead) who rows the would if the dead in his boat over the river Acheron.

Moreover, *Yama* and *Hades* both figures are deeply rooted in the realms of justice and thus decides the fate of the souls. Another allegory between the two mythical beings is that Hades is accompanied by *Cerberus*, while Yama's dog was known as *shravara*, both guard the doors of their respective netherworlds.



### Hermes and Narada (□□□□: (

According to the Greek mythology Hermes was the son of Zeus whereas Hindu scriptures describe *Narada* as the spiritual son of Vishnu. Both these mythical figures have similar roles in thief respective cultures, that is both act as messengers of gods. Both are devious figures and have manipulative abilities. Humans as well as gods fall prey to their skilled craftsmanship as a Machiavellian god. Both Hermes and *Narada* can move between the world of gods and humans at their own will.

## Conclusion

Thus one can see a close allegory between the ancient Greek and Hindu mythology which may point towards some similarities in the origins of these faiths. Aryans had connections with both the beliefs .

## References

- Greek Myths." Greek Myths Greek Mythology. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2014.
- Campbell Joseph, the hero with a Thousand Faces , New world Library, Third edition. July 28, 2008
- Hasten L.W. Eddas and Vedas , Comparative Mythology and the Aryans Invasion Hypothesis, rep. University of New York, 1996, web.
- Soanes, Catherine, Oxford English dictionary, New Delhi, - Oxford University Press-2000.
- The Bhagvad Gita, Chapter 10, sloka 20 ,Chicago, Ill. : The University of Chicago press(1929).
- G. Oswald, Sabine, Concise Encyclopaedia of Greek and Roman Mythology, Gilmour and Dean Ltd, Hamilton and London, 1965.

